BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
ADMINISTRATION & EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

There was a regular meeting of the above referenced subcommittee held on Monday, June 6, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in via Zoom remote meeting platform.

Committee members present were: Mayor Danielle Wong, Chair, Deputy Mayor Gregory Davis, Co-Chair, Councilors Kenneth McClary, Shamar Mahon and Anthony Harrington

Also present were: Stanley Hawthorne, Town Manager, Sharron Howe, Assistant to the Town Manager, Councilors Rickford Kirton, Suzette DeBeatham-Brown, Joseph Merritt, Scott Sharlow, Director of Information & Technology, Jennifer Valentino-Rodriguez, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Nancy Haynes, Risk and Purchasing Manager and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council

Guest were: Joseph Toner, Executive Director of the CT State Trades Building Council, Tom Romagnoli, Downes Construction, Don Poland and Denise Robidoux, Goman & York Consultants, Mark Weisman, Chair of the Library Building Committee

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion and Possible Action regarding the Project Labor Agreement with the Trades Union

Mr. Joseph Toner, Executive Director of the CT State Trades Building Council gave a brief overview of the facts and benefits of a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) with the Trades Union. He noted the offering of prevailing wages, extensive trainings and delivery on projects (time & quality).

Discussion

Councilor Harrington stated that workforce development is key for a project like this. There will be opportunities for Bloomfield residents to participate in on the job training contracts.

Councilor Merritt asked if this agreement would add any cost to the overall Library project. He also asked if this agreement contributed to the 30% minority participation per Town policy. It was noted that there will be minimal direct administration cost are applied to the project.

Councilor Mahon asked for the actual cost estimate of minimal direct administrative cost. It was noted that it is difficult to pinpoint because cost are driven by level of effort and hours, evaluating project schedule, Equal Employer Opportunity requirements, rates and hours.

Deputy Mayor Davis stated that there is a 40% MBE participation commitment by Downes Construction for Tier I & II contracts. He asked if the PLA would be impacted with union or non-union employees.

Councilor Kirton inquired about PLA solicitation and recruitment of Bloomfield residents. Mr. Toner noted that they utilize an existing listing of local unions listing of residents. There are approximately 200 Bloomfield residents currently participating in this Trades Union. Councilor Kirton asked the percentage of contractors reside in Bloomfield. Mr. Toner stated that he is unsure.
Councilor DeBeatham-Brown noted that she is a strong supporter of the PLA, which is a vehicle to launch as a trades worker into a qualified career. She asked if Downes Construction has reviewed the PLA and submit cost estimates.

Councilor Mahon stated that it is difficult to support the PLA with unknown minimal cost for administrative duties. He asked what is the PLA doing different from existing town policy and 40% MBE participation commitment from Downes Construction.

Mayor Wong stated that the Council must address the Library Building Committee budgetary concerns, the project is currently over budget. She commented on the history of labor unions coming in on budget and timeline.

_it was moved by Councilor McClary, seconded by Councilor Harrington to recommend to the full Council approval of the Project Labor Agreement._

**VOTE:**

- **AYE:** D. Wong, G. Davis, K. McClary, A. Harrington
- **NAY:** S. Mahon
- **ABSTAIN:** None

The motion passes, 4-1-0.

**Town’s Website Redesign Update**

Mr. Scott Sharlow, Director of Information & Technology gave a brief status update on the Town’s Website Redesign. There have been ongoing meetings with the Website Taskforce members. Each department has designated a “cyber champion” to be the point person to gather and disseminate information relative to their respective departments.

The Town has engaged in service through our current vendor Civic Plus to assist with the website redesign. The team has discussed color schemes, drop down mega menus and sub site development for Economic Development.

There is no estimated timeframe for project completion at this time. The Town recently entered into agreement and design phase of the main Town webpage and overall layout.

**Discussion regarding Community Investment Fund Opportunities**

Mayor Wong gave a brief high-level overview of the Community Investment Fund Opportunities for the Town of Bloomfield.

The Community Investment Fund 2030 (CIF) is a five-year grant program of up to $875 million to foster economic development in historically underserved communities across Connecticut. Designated municipalities, community development corporations, and nonprofit organizations that serve these communities are eligible to apply.

The Notice of funding Availability and application materials are available now, and the deadline to submit applications is July 25, 2022. The first round of funding will provide a target of up to $75 million in total funding,
with a minimum individual project size of $250,000. The CIF Board anticipates two rounds of funding per year for five years.

Mr. Stanley D. Hawthorne, Town Manager stated two weeks ago, the Town received official notification of eligibility to apply. The State of Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development will administer this program. He is information for the portal application submission. Mr. Hawthorne also stated that he has formed a CIF Taskforce to recommend and submit capital improvement project for Community Development and small business programs.

Discussion

Deputy Mayor Davis stated that the Town has been working with state legislators State Senator Douglas McCrorey and State Representative Bobby Gibson, with primary focus on library building project shortfall gap.

Councilor Merritt commented on suggesting additional funding for the East Coast Greenway and other recreational areas near Blue Hills, Bill Lee Fields.

Mayor Wong mentioned Wintonbury Mall, can support redevelopment to Town Center.

Councilor McClary agreed with considering the library project, if we wait, may influence project cost. He also included consideration of funding Rockwell Park.

Mr. Hawthorne cautioned the subcommittee members with Library Building project, seeking a legal opinion relative to continued cost escalation. The library project is not limited to one grant resource.

Councilor Kirton would like to continue with focus on other infrastructure and flooding issues within Town. The Town is in need a comprehensive plan to address these concerns.

Discussion and Status Update regarding the Bloomfield Rehabilitation Program

Ms. Jennifer Valentino-Rodriguez gave a brief overview and status update of the proposed Bloomfield Rehabilitation Program.

In the last few months, the department received half a dozen calls from residents, requesting information on any programs that are available for housing rehabilitation. Additionally, the number of calls are increasing at Social & Youth Services regarding quality of life issues for homes.

There have been many great discussions with staff about what items in the toolbox, which we can have as a community to provide to the residents to help people have a better quality of life in their homes and be able to maintain older homes as the years go on for each of the structures.

The staff have been working on a template program for implementation for these home repair issues.

Mr. Donald Poland of Goman & York Economic Development Consultants gave a brief overview of what is required to create and sustain funding for the program and overall structure for a Bloomfield Rehabilitation Program.

Mr. Poland gave two examples of how to establish a housing rehabilitation program.

1. **Town Funded** – Non-profit lender, to do the underwriting on the program.
2. **Partnership with Community Bank** (Town funding the gap, the town does the underwriting, with the possibility of assuming risk.

3. **Seek other funding opportunities** such as the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

Mr. Poland noted that typically, recognizing that most loans would probably be 5 to 10 years in length with a base loan amount of $5000.00 minimum and $30,000 as a maximum. There have been some discussions to have more flexibility with the maximum of $30,000 ceiling, when it relates to ADA improvements. It has been noted that those cost of renovations substantially increase and then ultimately set interest rates, based on kind of need, in one was that lower income households would qualify for lowest interest rates at 3% or two and a half percent.

Then, essentially, the town would have to raise the funds for the program both the amount of money loaned and the administration. The costs of running the program see that essentially enter into a partnership with nonprofit lender you provide the funding that would fund those loans and you provide the guidance for the underwriting and structure and the administrative costs to the phone to run the Program.

Mr. Poland also explained how you fund the program moving forward. He stated that it could be either, town allocated funds is a line item in every year into the budget into rehabilitation loan fund.

The Town could also apply for Community investment dollars through the State Bonding Commission, philanthropic organizations, like the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving as another source of funding for that program and going with a Community bank.

Then, the Town is not funding the actual loans themselves, so there is kind of huge savings they do not have to come up with those large sums of money to cover the cost of the loans. The Town would be funding is the gap between the favorable interest rate for the local homeowner and the going rate the Bank is going to expect.

**Discussion**

Mayor Wong stated that this program could be very transformational to the Community. She stated that she would not support utilizing local tax dollars to fund that program which appeals to seeking grant funds like for Hartford Foundation of Public Giving which they run programs, and fund these types of initiatives.

Deputy Mayor Davis stated that he would prefer Community bank involvement and evaluation of risk assessment impact. He noted that this program is a great concept and worthy of exploring.

Councilor DeBeatham-Brown stated that this is a great program for the Community Investment Fund. She also inquired about status update with eligibility for CDBG funding. This could be a very viable program for residents.

There was a lengthy discussion of committee members, other Councilors, Town Administration and consultants regarding the financial sustainability of this program, grant decision criteria and requirements, grant timeframe, and percentage of grant amount relative to income for the Town.
**NEW BUSINESS**

**Discussion and Overview of the Eminent Domain Process**

Mr. Poland gave a brief overview of the differences between other acquisition methods, and the role from a Council and administration perspective.

Mr. Poland noted two methods in which the Town of Bloomfield can pursue with the Eminent Domain process.

- **Chapter 130 - Redevelopment Plan by Redevelopment Agency**
- **Chapter 132 - Municipal Development Project by Development Agency, not necessarily a Redevelopment Agency**

Essentially, the legislative body (Town Council) establishes the entity, the chief executive officer, I believe the town manager, as the authority for appointments to the Agency. However, the legislative body approves those appointments, once that entity is created, you would then be able to adopt Chapter 130 - Redevelopment Plan.

From that plan, you have to be able to demonstrate that 20% of the properties within the target within the redevelopment area are suffering from deteriorated conditions that is ultimately harmful to the public well-being.

In that plan you lay out what it is you want from a redevelopment perspective, including identifying properties for potential acquisition either through purchase or an eminent domain purchase. Then the plan ultimately has to be commented on by the Town, Plan and Zoning Commission (TPZ), to determine consistency with the plan of conservation development, then the redevelopment agency can adopt that plan, and if they adopt it, they then send it to the Town Council for its approval.

Once the plans approved, you can identify a property already identified in the plan for eminent domain, if you do so you do need to hold a public hearing specific to that domain action.

The Chapter 132 - Municipal Development Plan is a bit more comprehensive than the Redevelopment agency.

The route has larger is more intensive statutory requirements for what is in the plan. The plan is a bit of a larger task to take on, but then they similar process once again for the adoption, individual public hearings for any specific property being considered for eminent domain. Those eminent domain actions, ultimately, the Town Council has to approve them.

With the Chapter 130 rule, it is a majority vote of the Council to approve and with a Chapter 132 - Municipal Development projects, it is a two-thirds majority of the Council must approve.

**Discussion**

Councilor Kirton requested a more formalized opinion from the Town Attorney relative to guidance in this process.

Deputy Mayor Davis inquired about the actual timeframe when considering a legal acquisition of property through the Eminent Domain process. In addition, he asked if the Town would have to allocate or set aside funding in an escrow type of account to secure the property if successful. It was noted that funds must be
available funds have to be available they'd have to be available at the point in time, that you're ready to make a purchase or an acquisition on the property and ready to file the eminent domain papers, with the Court.

Councilor McClary commented on spending taxpayer dollars the sale to real estate developers, because what the town is going to do is buy this property and turn it over to the Redevelopment agency.

He also inquired about the cost to sustain redevelopment agencies, relative to staffing to be able to do these things, marketing, etc.

Mr. Hawthorne noted that a rough estimate for at least for partial year is approximately $40,000. It also happens to be something that Goman & York able to service and provide that service to us in conjunction with their other economic development responsibilities.

Mr. Hawthorne indicated that the upcoming Council Business workshop, the Council would experience the “EDD” - Education, Deliberation and Direction on the Community Investment Fund applications and the creation of the Development Agency.

There was a general discussion regarding funding to sustain the Development Agency.

Discussion and Status Update regarding the Small Business Program

The majority of businesses are small businesses, and there is the need to help them. The goal of this program, Town of Bloomfield Small Business Equity Fund. This program will focus on and promote equity and diversity with the small businesses, which would be open to all Bloomfield small businesses.

With priority, given to small businesses that are owned by Bloomfield residents and are considered socially disadvantaged and those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice.

On a cultural basis because of their identity as members of this group so that's the priority that it's open to all businesses but that's where you set the structure for it, and then you can set your program criteria, approximately from a $200,000 to a $300,000.

Based program, the Town would add to that administration fees and then marketing fees. Moreover, Mrs. Robidoux researched other successful towns and cities for their program criteria.

- Building the business has to have no tax liens or unpaid legal just judgments.
- They have to be operating as a for profit business, they have to be in business for a certain length of time and have a mortgage or lease obligations within the Town of Bloomfield.
- Have less than 100 employees, less than $1 million dollars in gross annual receipts
- Micro enterprise business, meaning that it has five or less employees, including the owner and the owner must earn a household annual income of less than 80% of the area median income to be a small business with less than 20 employees.
- Where at least one job is retained by a low to moderate-income employee or you can have a documented need for that so and you can set up all kinds of exclusions for it.

She also commented on various ways to fund this program, State of Connecticut grants, bonding through pro funds, Community Investment Funds for funding.
The administration costs and who could administer this program, either a bank or local credit union that could administer the funding for it, there are nonprofits that specialize in this.

Discussion
Councilor Kirton asked what our purpose of government is. Partly, it is to create an environment for businesses to flourish, making sure that we have taxes at an affordable level for our residents, making sure when it comes to those vital services such as the need for major road repairs.

Councilor Kirton noted that all of these additional things are good; however, the Town does not have the capacity as a small community, to fund and tackle these suggested project ideas.

Councilor McClary stated that the role of government is to solve problems, and I think that is what we are trying to do here with this. He noted that Goman & York have done a very good job of engaging and understanding the needs of local small businesses.

I do not think we are doing too much I do not think we are doing enough, and so, if there is an opportunity for us to spend taxpayer dollars to help small businesses and retain them as community partners.

Library Building Committee Report
Mr. Mark Weisman, Chair of the Library Building Committee gave a brief status update of the library project.

The Library Project is currently at the tail end of schematic design, which is the first of three design phases prior to building and construction.

In addition to the schematic plans themselves, in this phase the Building Committee signed the contract with the State of Connecticut for our $1 million library grant for process.

The committee has selected the owner project representative, which is Colliers Project Leadership. They will mainly assist with moving the library in and out and furniture procurement that those will be their main objectives.

The committee has also established temporary space needs, researched available options and are ready to negotiate a potential lease, for that when the library is ready, which is very soon.

However, this process is taking longer than expected to complete the due diligence, specifically the land surveys soils investigations, hazardous material analyses, but most significantly, it's taking longer to conclude the schematic phase cost estimate.

This is the first of three times that we are going to have a cost estimate conducted prior to going to bid. The committee is now at a crossroads.

After Downs Construction completed the estimate and then reconcile that with the SAP architects, the Library Building Committee was notified of a deficit of approximately $5.5 million dollars over budget without compromising programming and aesthetics.
The committee has invested a lot of time and effort into this these professionals to develop these suggestions, but after developing them we are still in the neighborhood of about $1.5 million dollars shortfall.

If the committee accept all of the proposed changes, they recommend a final reducing the square footage of a process based on state minimum recommendations.

The proposed system will serve a population of approximately 27,000 people. Our current population is in the area about 21,000 so that is what we went to referendum with that 36,900. However, the completion of the schematic design about 39,400 square feet for the system, compared to the referendum number of 36,900.

This suggestion to reduce square footage at Prosser was budget driven and based on a reduction about 2800 square feet seemed appropriate.

To bring focus back down with a target of our original number, the architect has developed some plans showing this overall reduction. Approximately, $350,000 over of the referendum number that is the final number at this point for a shortfall.

Given the number of contingencies, in this phase of the design, it would most likely be a go forward position.

However, the Library Building Committee wants to consider all possible options that will result in a functional building for today and our future needs. Therefore, the idea of additional funding as the Town Manager stated, the understanding at this point is that, if the Town can secure additional funding it may be available, over and above the referendum amount.

Therefore, given the current economic climate, time is of the essence, which translates to escalating costs these any of these options we are looking at securing additional funds major redesign would extend the schedule of beyond the current delay we are already a couple months.

In addition, Downes Construction, to see where the project stands and how escalation falls into that, is developing scheduling options.

Discussion

Councilor Merritt noted that the overall purpose to build a new library was to increase space and address environmental issues.

Councilor McClary asked about the timeframe to have a decision for funding. There is no definitive date, the longer the wait, the more expensive.

Councilor Kirton - concerned with what message is this sending to our neighbors. He asked for clarification of support chain issues to address increase cost, total cost spent thus far of soft costs to professionals.

Mr. Weisman noted that only concept figures were included in the November 2021 referendum vote, not schematic design cost estimates.

Deputy Mayor Davis commended the Chair and Library Building Committee for their dedication and commitment to this project. It is a difficult decision to make relative to finance. He thanked them all for their efforts and advocacy for a 21st Century Library.
Mr. Hawthorne thanked Mr. Weisman for his presentation as he reinforced all options available to the committee at this time.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT**

Mr. Stanley Hawthorne, Town Manager gave a brief overview of his bi-weekly report from May 23, 2022. He noted that most of the agenda items discussed were most of his topical points to review.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

1. **Robert Berman, 8 Hiram Lane** stated that the Library Director was heavily involved with this entire process. He also commented on the PLA concept, which is excellent, all work through the unions and would exclude some town businesses, major concern. For the record, he also stated that the Human Services Building was never over budget.

2. **Michael Oliver, 92 Glenwood Avenue** commented on the support for PLA - Carpenter’s Union.

3. **Kevin Gough, 5 Bear Ridge Drive** echoed support for the PLA discussions, great to bring jobs and training aspect for Bloomfield residents. He also commented on the high taxes and the need to address why Bloomfield spend so much money than other surrounding towns. Mr. Gough briefly commented on small business loans, rehabilitation housing program and space allocation for the new library construction.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Davis, seconded by Councilor Harrington and voted unanimously to approve the minutes of March 7, 2022.

It was moved by Councilor Mahon, seconded by Councilor Harrington and voted unanimously to approve the special meeting minutes of May 10, 2022.

**ADJOURNMENT**

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Davis, seconded by Councilor McClary to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m.